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Statement submitted by Droit à l'énergie SOS futur, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2009/100.

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Statement*

Access to energy is necessary for health

The list of medical instruments at the hospital in Kayunga, Uganda, includes not only scalpels but also torches. Although the hospital is connected to an electricity supply — unlike 75 per cent of homes in Africa — it receives electricity only sporadically, every other day on average; this means that torches are required and that the lives of many patients are being endangered. In Benin, several thousand kilometres away, more than 1,500 women died in childbirth in 2008, because Caesarean sections could not be performed due to the lack of energy.

Our member organization in Senegal, the Association des Médecins de Brousse, has drawn our attention to the fact that if there is no energy, vaccines and medicines can be kept for only a few hours in iceboxes, since there are no refrigerators. We have repeatedly pointed out that, unless there is access to energy, it will be impossible to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. This is particularly true of the goals concerning reduction of child mortality; improvement of maternal health; and combating of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

Lack of energy is often associated with a lack of safe water, because it is almost always necessary to use energy to provide access to water, and safe water has a direct impact on life expectancy, child mortality, health and the level of health protection, etc.

Our organization would like to help provide practical responses by working with all the necessary partners in a dynamic approach. During the current crisis, in these times of great volatility and anxiety, as the United Nations Secretary-General recently pointed out, while addressing climate issues, that the challenges of the melting icecaps should not be overshadowed by the meltdown of the financial markets. Let us say that the challenge of universal health should not be overshadowed by investments in universal access to energy.

* Issued without formal editing.